A Note of Thanks

The editor would like to thank the Executive Committee of the Poe Studies Association for its fine support over the past five years, the PSA Newsletter's contributors for their excellent reviews and notes, and the Newsletter's readers for their welcome responsiveness. The Newsletter is especially indebted to its three recent editorial assistants: Dr. Lloyd Worley (University of Northern Colorado), 1986-87; Dr. Barbara Cantalupo (Penn State, Allentown), 1987-89; and Ms. Susan R. Delaney (Penn State, DuBois), 1989-91—to its Advisory Editor, Dr. Eric W. Carlson (University of Connecticut, Emeritus); and to its compositor, Ms. Pat Manganaro (Commercial Job Printing). Finally, the editor wishes to thank Dr. Jacqueline Schoch, former CEO, Penn State, DuBois Campus; Dr. Terry Hartman, CEO, Penn State, DuBois Campus; Dr. John W. Furlow, Jr., Director of Academic Affairs, Penn State, DuBois Campus; Dr. Theodore E. Kiffer, Interim Dean of The College of Liberal Arts, Penn State, University Park; and Dr. Joseph W. Michels, former Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Study, Penn State, University Park—their generosity has vitally nurtured the PSA Newsletter.

Eighteenth Annual Meeting
Poe Studies Association

The annual meeting of the PSA at the Modern Language Association Convention consisted of two sessions, both chaired by Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania) and focused on Poe's "Fictional Voyages." The first session, attended by 48 people, was held at 1:45 p.m. on December 28th. Speakers were Jorgen H. Holmgaard (University of Aalborg, Denmark), "Space and Time in Poe's Fictional Voyages"; Arkady Plotnitsky (University of Pennsylvania), "Out of Space—Out of Time"; and R. C. DeProspo (Washington College), "Pym, Prometheus, and the Mariner." The second session, attended by 36 people, met at 10:15 a.m. on December 29th. Speakers were Hans-Ulrich Mohr (Univ. Bielefeld, Germany), "Poe's Aesthetic Voyages into Organic Nature"; Nancy Bentley (Boston University), "Poe and the Disfiguring of Travel Writing"; Paige Matthey Bynum (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), "Racial Anthropology and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym"; and David Kadlec (University of Chicago), "The Flowering of Miss Jack Tarr." The topic for the 1991 meeting, to be held at the MLA Convention in San Francisco, is "Texts and Intertexts."

The Treasurer's Report showed the PSA to have a membership of 202. Income for 1990 (to Dec. 15) was $1578.69, expenses $814.59, leaving a cash-on-hand balance of $1934.22. Interest from our investment account was $157.13, bringing the fund to $2161.70. Total assets were $4095.92.


Hats off to Kent Ljungquist and Ben Fisher! In a period when the paths of historical criticism and literary theory have diverged, these two distinguished Poe scholars have managed to deal with both even-handedly, informatively, professionally. In their annual reviews of work on Poe, both Ljungquist and Fisher are quick to fault purely critical treatments for being under-researched, but neither reviewer hesitates to chastise much historical scholarship for being, as one might put it, under-theorized. On both counts they are dead right.
The Virginia State Library's Poe exhibit continued through early April. Of special note is the fact that a new State Library is planned for the site of the old Swan Tavern, and consideration is being given to the designing of a Poe Room for the new facility.

There are twenty-two items in this book, mostly essays of various lengths and of varying degrees of interest, contributed by a variety of hands, some of them well-known in the Poe establishment, and some not. But what the book is about, what is "done" in it, is less easily stated. The editor defines what he calls its "unifying theme" as "considerations of Poe in his milieu." This sounds more like subject matter than theme, and the editor virtually says so when he grants that the book's title will be found misleading if it is taken to imply "any severe chronological limitations," by which, presumably, he means the years 1809-1849. But I believe I know what Professor Fisher means. The subject we are chiefly interested in is not so much Poe and his times, i.e., Poe and the world he lived in, as it is Poe and the world that lived in him.

The trouble is that two important words in the book's title and subtitle--"Times" and "Milieu"--give rise to a cluster of expectations that are only marginally (if that) literary. Other contexts come to mind: political and social history, economics ("Poe and the Gold Standard"), popular culture, and popular contemporary assumptions about religion and psychology. These components of Poe's milieu are seldom alluded to. No presidential is mentioned, nor did I come upon even one reference to the fact of slavery. The milieu that is meant, it turns out, is almost entirely ideational; the history that is brought in is almost entirely literary history. Or, in one case, literary theory, a context that would seem quite irrelevant to Poe's times and milieu.

But I can find no better way of "placing" the essay by Liliane Weissberg--"In Search of Truth and Beauty: Allegory in 'Berenice' and in 'The Domain of Arnheim'"--even though she makes no reference to literary theory or to any of its practitioners. But after having long pondered the lines that make up her essay without arriving at a coherent notion of what she has in mind, I felt perforce that I had to look between and beyond the lines, in order to discern what was not said. Absence of the expected references might be the key, or at least a key, to the essay--just as in Professor Weissberg's reading of "Berenice," it is "not only the teeth, but rather the absence they disguise that seems to rule over the language and the structure of the text to which Egaeus, sitting in his library, compares life itself." Sitting in my library, and with Poe's story open before me, I again came upon the phenomenon of absence, for no text is named that is put by Egaeus to the use of his much binged-for dead brother and dead mother. One is highly personal theme of Poe's fervent wish for reunion with his much longed-for dead brother and dead mother. One is and the spoken word, apparently, are similar in their physical existence, but this physical existence also keeps the secret of another meaning . . . . Egaeus remains a latecomer in regard to the history of language.

In brief, Professor Weissberg's essay (which in 1982 was given originally as a lecture) proved too arcane for me. I had no such difficulty with April Seeley's "Poe and the Will." She deals with some minor tales mostly, although "Ligeia" is not overlooked, but among all of Poe's characters how could she ignore the one named William Wilson? Her traversal of the evidence she does bring forward seemed to me sensible, though not acute. But I did not find enough there to warrant her sweeping conclusion that Poe was "an original thinker deeply aware of the philosophical and psychological dangers explicit in the American tradition as it was developing in his time and would continue to develop."

In "Poe, Locke, and Kant," Joan Dayan discusses "Berenice" and "Ligeia" and touches on a number of other less-known stories. Her contention is that these stories are satirical, mocking (via their deranged narrators) the idealistic Kantian assumptions of the New England Transcendentalists. Reminiscent of Clark Griffith's landmark essay of some years ago, this one probes deeper and presents as good a case as I've seen for identifying Poe as an anti-Gothic ironist.

In an essay, much narrower in scope, on "The Raven," Dennis W. Eddings makes the same assumption. That poem is clearly, he avers, a bad poem, composed as such for the purpose--a didactic purpose! Must add--of satirizing the incompetence of the speaker, his overwrought state of mind, and, more generally, "the destructive potential of the uncontrolled imagination." And as for the poem's "moral": "Reason would have saved the student." Eddings leaves me here, however, or I him. For don't we all go along with the premise, or pretense, that the student was the "I" who wrote the poem, and that he could have done so only by following the coolly rational program laid out by Poe in "The Philosophy of Composition"?

We tend to think of "The Raven" as more war-horse than poem. But now and again a good case is made for reading it, and taking it, seriously. Barton Levi St. Armand made such a case a few years ago, and in this book David H. Hirsch--also of Brown University--makes another, in his "The Raven and the Nightingale." I found his essay unusually rich in the comparisons and contrasts it makes, and, generally, in its suggestiveness. Hirsch's two last sentences are worth quoting: So instead of having language and poetic imagination provide a springboard to ecstasy, as Keats had apparently hoped they would in his "Ode to a Nightingale," Poe makes language and the poetic imagination become the blank wall itself. Absurdly pressing the bird for a language message from "the beyond," the bereaved lover can manage to extract only the repeated utterance, "Nevermore!"

One of the volume's essays, Richard Kopley's account of the "Ragged Mountains" story seen in its relationship to Pym, has as its main thesis that in both stories there is latent "the highly personal theme of . . . Poe's fervent wish for reunion with his much longed-for dead brother and dead mother." One is
reminded, of course, of Marie Bonaparte’s famous thesis, and one feels—or at least I do—the same way after reading both her book and the Kopley essay: “Seems awfully far-fetched . . . and yet . . . .” Kopley’s is the most wheels-within-wheels piece in the present collection. Much whirring-away goes on, but it’s skillfully managed. I found it odd, though, that Kopley does not bring up the fact, unfriendly to his thesis, that in his one known reference to *Pym*, Poe called it “a very silly book.”

I see that I have commented on only six of the twenty-two items in the collection and have failed to notice the solidly impressive contribution made by Bruce I. Weiner on a subject that I assumed had long ago been adequately taken care of, viz., “Poe and Blackwood’s.” Attention should also be called to the useful guidance that is provided by the editor in his Introduction.

Patrick F. Quinn
Wellesley College


Between 1815 and 1820, the young Poe repeatedly spent a good part of his summers in Scotland, chiefly in Ayrshire, the home county of Burns. Although Burns was dead, Scottish letters were on the wax. Byron, a Scot by lineage and early education, awoke to find himself famous with *Childe Harold* in 1812; Scott began the Waverley novels in 1814; and *Blackwood’s Magazine*, first published in 1817, nurtured the novelists of the 1820’s, James Hogg, J. G. Lockhart, and John Galt. Poe’s foster-father, John Allan, was born and raised in Ayrshire and brought his wife and ward there to stay with his maternal relatives, who were also paternal relations of John Galt. Like Galt, who contributed to *Blackwood’s* and wrote a biography of Byron, Poe grew up to be deeply influenced by the great Edinburgh journal and Scotland’s rebellious poet-laird.

Given this biographical background and Poe’s repeated allusions to Scottish writers, from Blair—whom he extolled—to Carlyle—whom he despised—one might expect a book on Scottish and American nineteenth-century literature to detail further Caledonian-Columbian historical connections and chart the pattern of mutual influence. Manning, however, eschews doing this. She says virtually nothing about biography or literary influence, but instead seeks to show how both literatures displayed in the early 1800’s a common Puritan past secularized in a provincial present. After introductory chapters explaining how Calvinism was translated through Jonathan Edwards and David Hume into Jeffersonian democracy and Common Sense philosophy, Manning devotes the bulk of her book to examining what she considers peculiarly “puritan-provincial” genres of prose fiction: tales of divided minds, narrations by spying spectators, spectral masquerades, and journeys to or from the provinces. She illustrates the first three of these genres with one tale apiece by Poe and draws a variety of suggestive parallels—between “William Wilson” and Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, for instance, or “The Masque of the Red Death” and Carlyle’s “Diamond Necklace,” or “The Man of the Crowd” and *The Letters of the British Spy* by Poe’s first literary mentor, William Wirt.

Yet the treatment of Poe scarcely goes beyond brief analyses of these three tales, and even the more substantial readings of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville or Scott, Hogg, and Lockhart expose the unfortunate blinkers of a narrowly theological and geographical viewpoint. In the case of Poe, Manning all too easily identifies the Red Death with “Original Sin” and hastily condemns “William Wilson” as a “shallow piece of virtuosity” beside the “powerful solidity” of the regionally characteristic *Confessions of Hogg*. In order to prove her thesis, she misreads Byronic alienation (skipping Byron altogether) and Blackwoodian effect (covering *Blackwood’s* in a page) as Calvinist reprobation and provincial angst. Furthermore, she undermines her own thesis by claiming *The Tempest* and Caleb Williams, though written by Englishmen, as primary models for what she considers characteristically American and Scottish, maintaining that such “singular masterpieces” are “anomalous.” Yet she allows no anomalies in American and Scottish letters. Even avowed opponents like Poe and Carlyle or Emerson are cut and fitted to a common Procrustean bed of puritan-provincialism.

Kenneth Alan Hovey
University of Texas at San Antonio

**Gansevoort Melville’s *Pym***

One of the items listed in *A Herman Melville Collection Exhibited at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library . . . from the Collection of William S. Reese* (New Haven, 1991) is Gansevoort Melville’s copy of the British first edition of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. The entry for this item reads: “Gansevoort Melville’s copy, probably obtained by him while he was serving in the American Legation in London in 1846. Gansevoort negotiated British publication agreements for his brother for both *Typee* and *Omoo* that spring, but died in May. His effects, including this book, and his corpse, were shipped to New York and arrived in late June, 1846. It is possible that Herman had this volume in hand while writing *Mardi.*”

**Research Society for American Periodicals**

A new scholarly group, the Research Society for American Periodicals, was organized at the recent American Literature Association Conference. The group’s President is Robert J. Scholnick (College of William and Mary), its President-Elect is Edward Chielens (Henry Ford Community College), and its Secretary-Treasurer is James T. F. Tanner (University of North Texas). To join the organization and thereby receive the *RSAP Newsletter* and the annual *American Periodicals*, send a check for $15, made out to the Research Society for American Periodicals, to Professor Tanner at the Department of English, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203-3827.
Poe at the End

by R. H. W. Dillard

October. Poe in Baltimore. Poe
At the end, going North, away
From Virginia, keeping promises
Despite the black beak of despair,
Laid over, waiting for the train,
But just now, drunk, out of the coop,
Leaning in Lombard Street
Against the window of a store,
Making his pitched and stammered way
Toward Cooth & Sergeant’s Tavern—
(Sergeant Major Poe, First Artillery,
Honorably discharged so many years ago)—
Slow way of starts and fits,
The drink and drugs sluing his heart
Into blind staggers and sways.

Away from Virginia and toward
Virginia in the grave. She played
The harp that January night and sang,
It was a good song, too,
But so soon, so quickly a tiny vessel
Popped in her throat like a New Year’s squib
Just as she reached her last high note.
And for five years it broke and broke
Again, until she died, was laid away,
And Poe learned an awful truth:
Helter skelter or catcher in the rye,
Art kills as often as it saves.

On Lombard Street in Baltimore, memory
Twists him, presses his forehead against the glass,
His heart wheezing like wind through the cottage wall
In Fordham where Virginia lay. His heart lifts
In his chest, flaps clumsily aloft
Like a great white bird, then settles back,
And Poe is grounded, left in the lurch
As he was abandoned by his party friends
After voting all morning under a dozen names:
His own, Usher, Reynolds, Dupin, Pym,
Raising his hand again and again, taking the oath,
Swearing he was who he was and was not,
Swearing he was.

Hart Crane asked him
Nearly a century later whether he denied
The ticket, but how could he deny a thing,
He who was all things that day and none,
A multitude of beings and only one,
Leaning on a window, his forehead on the glass,
His eyes unfocused or focused deep within.

And yet he does see past Virginia
With blood on her blouse, past Elmira
Left behind in Richmond, jilted
Before she ever reached the altar,
Past even the bloated face of Edgar Poe
Reflected in the window, drawn and drawn out
In the wobbly glass, the sodden man
In a stranger’s threadbare clothes
With only Dr. Carter’s borrowed cane
Still clutched in that familiar hand,
Sees through the tortured glass
To a display of pewter and silver
Laid out within the shop, slick knives
With thin images of a singular man
Upon each blade, rounded shining cups
With a bulge-nosed alien face
In each curved surface, two large
Silver plates with his own desperate stare
Reflected plain in each, the brow,
The carved out cheeks, blue lips
Beneath the sad mustache.

But he
Looks beyond this olio of images,
These hard lies and harder truths
Displayed before him, to find
A large silver coffee urn, beknobbed
And crusted with handles and thick
Vines, blossoms and twisted ribbons,
Its surface flat and curved and rounded,
Concave, convex, and convolute,
And in its turbulent reflections
He sees a young man’s face,
A young man with dark hair
And uneven eyes, a young man
Leaning on a cane with promises
To keep, a face he recognizes
But cannot name, knows but cannot claim,
That looks him steadily eye to eye.

His heart will soon calm down enough
For him to stutter on, reach Cooth &
Sergeant’s, fall onto a bench, be found,
Be carried to the hospital, lie there in fever,
Call Reynolds’ name, ease out of delirium
Only to say, gently, “Lord help my poor soul,”
And die, having for one moment on Lombard Street
Learned still another awful truth:
Pell mell or waiting just to die,
Art saves as often as it kills.

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Recent and Forthcoming Poe-Related Books


Scholarly Poe Events

Liviu Cotrău (University of Cluj-Napoca), who edits the Romanian edition of Poe’s works, has had his Fulbright award renewed for 1991-92. Prof. Cotrău is now affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania. Two volumes of his edition have already been published; four more volumes are projected.

In “A New Look at an Enigma of the Night” (New York Times, 19 March 1991, pp. C1 and C5), Malcolm W. Browne writes that Poe’s explanation of the mystery of the darkness of the night sky—that the universe is finite—is similar to the explanation of astrophysicist Edward R. Harrison (University of Massachusetts at Amherst) and has recently been elaborated further by astrophysicist Paul S. Wesson (University of Waterloo and University of California at Berkeley).

On March 27, 1991, radio station WPSU of State College, Pennsylvania broadcast on its “Odyssey Through Literature” program an interview with Johann Pillai (SUNY, Buffalo) concerning the Baudelaire and Mallarmé translations of Poe’s “The Raven.”

At the NEMLA Convention (Hartford; April 5-7, 1991), the Poe Studies session (April 6) featured the topic “The Logic and Rhetoric of Science in Poe’s Storytelling.” Chaired by Susan Welsh (Rutgers University), the session included Tracy Ware (Bishop’s University), speaking on “‘A Descent into the Maelström’: The Status of Scientific Rhetoric in a Perverse Romance”; and Doris A. Helbig (University of North Carolina), speaking on “Edgar Allan Poe: Experimenters in Mesmerism and Space Travel.” Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison (Johns Hopkins Medical School) was called to a medical emergency and was therefore unable to participate in the session. The chair for next year’s NEMLA Poe session is Carol P. Hovanec (Rampone College); the secretary is Davide Stimmili (Yale University). The topic for the session is open; please send abstracts and papers by September 1, 1991 to Professor Hovanec at 705 Route 9W, Nyack, New York 10960.

Burton R. Pollin (CUNY, Emeritus) spoke on Poe in an interview broadcast on Fordham station WFUV on April 11, 1991. On April 27, Pollin offered a Poe presentation to the Bronx County Historical Society at the Baychester Public Library.

The Edgar Allan Poe Museum celebrated its seventieth anniversary with a reception in the Enchanted Garden on April 20, 1991, and a lecture on Poe’s The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym by Richard Kopley (Penn State, DuBois Campus) at the Virginia State Library and Archives on April 21.

Among the opening sessions of the American Literature Association Conference (May 24-26, 1991; Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.) was a Poe session chaired by Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV (University of Mississippi). Kent Ljunquist (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) spoke on “Valdemar and the Frogpondians”; Kenneth Alan Hovey (University of Texas at San Antonio) offered a presentation titled “I Am Epicurus”; and Barbara Cantalupo (Penn State, Allentown) discussed “Invoction in Eureka.” A subsequent session, devoted to “Journalism and the Canon” and chaired by Richard Kopley, featured two speakers on Poe: David A. Long (Davidson College) talked on “Edgar Allan Poe and Edwin P. Whipple;" and Burton R. Pollin assessed “The Effect on Poe’s Poetic Canon of Periodical Press Obituaries and Posthumous Reviews.” The session was concluded by Mary De Jong (Penn State, Shenango Valley), who gave a paper titled “Serving Art with Their Left Hands Only: Women Poets of the Old South”; among the poets she treated was Susan Archer Talley, author of The Home Life of Poe (1907).

Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith (East Anglia University) has organized the East Anglia Gothic Conference, to be held July 9-12, 1991. An American Gothic Society is in the planning stages; those interested should write to Dr. Helen Killoran, P. O. Box 542, Shelton, Washington 98584.

Richard Kopley will present “Edgar Allan Poe and The Philadelphia Saturday News” at the American Antiquarian

The Poe sessions at the MLA Convention in San Francisco, December 27-30, 1991, will focus on "Texts and Intertexts." At the first session, chaired by Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania), Ortwin de Graef (Katholiekke Universiteit Leuven) will present "Dead Harrings: You Must Have Mistaken the Author"; James Hicks (University of Pennsylvania) will offer "The Us of Usher: Intertext and Context in Poe's Foundational Tale"; Meredith L. McGill (The Johns Hopkins University) will deliver "To Plagiarize the Plagiarist: Repetition and Authority in the Poe-Longfellow War"; and Thomas Cohen (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) will speak on "'Runic Rhymes': Poe, Pragmatism, and Post-modernism." At the second session, chaired by J. Gerald Kennedy (Louisiana State University), Patricia Merivale (University of British Columbia) will discuss "The Man of the Crowd" and the Metaphysical Detective Story; James Winchell (Stanford University) will talk on "Mutatio in pejus: Poe's Ms. Found in France Fin de Siècle"; Rae Beth Gordon (University of Connecticut) will consider "Poe: Optics, Hysteria, and Interior Decoration"; and Michael Levine (Yale University) will treat "Poe, Freud, and the Bookworm."

Other Poe Events


On April 5-7, 1991, Historic Accommodations of Cape May and the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts sponsored an "Edgar Allan Poe Mystery Weekend." The weekend included visits to scenes from Poe stories, portrayed at various Cape May inns, and a "Poe Dinner Theatre," featuring a one-man show on Poe.

The 33-minute Viewfinder Films documentary "Edgar Allan Poe: Architect of Dreams" recently enjoyed a series of premières in major Poe cities. It was shown at the University of Richmond on April 2, introduced by J. Gerald Kennedy; the Pratt Library of Baltimore on April 14, introduced by Frank Slater (The Johns Hopkins University); the Free Library of Philadelphia on April 21, introduced by Daniel Hoffman (University of Pennsylvania); the Museum of the City of New York on April 27, introduced by Joan Dayan (Queens College and CUNY Graduate Center); and the Boston Athenaeum on May 2, again introduced by Joan Dayan. Those interested in obtaining the documentary—purchase $250; rental $50—should write to Ms. Jean Mudge, 130 Bolinas Avenue, San Anselmo, California 94960, or call her at (415) 457-0626.

On Sunday, July 11, 1991, Norman George will perform "Poe Alone" at the Mohonk Festival of the Arts, held at the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York.

Poe scholars interested in "Pizza Worth 'Raven' About"—"Poe's Cultured Pies"—are advised to visit The Tell-Tale Hearth, at 1145 Hollins Street, at Carrollton Avenue, in Baltimore, one block from The 19th Century Shop. A familiar figure may be observed nursing a drink at the counter.

Work on Film Odyssey's Poe documentary progresses well. Already interviewed are Philip Glass, Alfred Kazin (CUNY Graduate Center), Iris Levine, Dennis Mirozowski (Casemate Museum), Stephen Nissenbaum (University of Massachusetts at Amherst), Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Regan (University of Pennsylvania), and Kenneth Silverman (NYU). Portraying Poe in biographical vignettes is Tony Maggio; Virginia is played by Devyn Puetz, and Mrs. Clemm by Marianne Mulerleile. A dramatization of "The Tell-Tale Heart" stars Treat Williams; the presentation of "The Cask of Amontillado" features Rene Auberojones as Fortunato and John Heard as Montresor. The NEH-supported film is produced by Karen Thomas, directed by Joyce Chopra, and filmed by James Glennon. The 58-minute-long documentary will be broadcast by PBS in 1992.

Recent Dissertations: August 1990-January 1991

Lou Ann Norman, "Romance Within a Romance: The Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe," DAI, 51 (September 1990), 853A; Sasha Alexander Weinstangel, "Images from Poe for Symphony Orchestra," DAI, 51 (October 1990), 1043A.

Kenneth Alan Hovey
University of Texas at San Antonio

A Query

Jeffrey Meyers (University of Colorado at Boulder) wishes to query PSA members regarding the public libraries and private collections that Poe visited. Please write to Professor Meyers at 1950 King Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80302.


The unflagging scholarly interest in Poe is at least equalled by the almost irresistible appeal he and/or his works have to creative writers. Among the latest instances of this appeal not resisted are two novels, The Black Throne by Roger Zelazny and Fred Saberhagen and The Hollow Earth by Rudy Rucker. Zelazny and Saberhagen know Poe well, but what they have done with that knowledge borders upon the bizarre. Their The Black Throne recasts a host of characters and elements from Poe's life and works in a story having almost no basis in Poe. The underlying plot concerns the efforts of the fabulously wealthy Seabright Ellison (something of a Daddy Warbucks figure originally from "The Domain of Arnheim") to prevent the "Unholy Trinity" of Rufus Griswold ("a black magician of some persuasion"), Charles Goodfellow (of Poe's "Thou Art the Man"), and Dr. Templeton (of "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains") from conspiring to manipulate the price of gold on the world market, a conspiracy which hinges upon
the success of the alchemist Von Kempelen. Seabright Ellison enlists the aid of Edgar Perry, a soldier of fortune and the principal narrator of the novel. But Perry is the point man in still another plot, one involving the "tripartite relationship" of himself, Edgar Allan Poe, and "Annie" (a composite of Annabel Lee, Virginia Poe, Ulalume, and Annie Richmond—or at least the Annie of "Landor's Cottage"), all three of whom exist in different time-space dimensions. Annie longs to unite all three in her "kingdom by the sea," but she has been abducted by Griswold and company with the intent of exploiting her "psychic abilities." It is Edgar Perry's pursuit of "Messers Goodfellow, Templeton, and Griswold" in his quest for Annie that makes the story. While undergoing experiences lifted from just about every major tale and many minor tales of Poe, from *Pym* to "King Pest," Perry encounters a host of characters including Dirk Peters and his "orang-outang" named Emerson; Monsieur Dupin, a private eye with his pet raven Grip; the casketed Ernest Valdemar accompanied by the aging seductress Ligeia (both of whom, it is suggested, are the parents of Annie); Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether; Tripetta, who spurns Hop-Frog at the prospect of a better match (i.e., with Prince Prospero); and so forth and so on. *The Black Throne* is itself an "unholy trinity" of spoof, comedy, and, at times, even serious fiction.

Rucker's *The Hollow Earth* is unadulterated science fiction based upon "Symmes's hole," the theory of John Cleves Symmes that there are polar openings to the hollow center of the earth, a theory which fascinated Poe and which Jeremiah Reynolds sought to confirm by means of a government-financed expedition. Rucker's narrator is Mason Algiers Reynolds, an adolescent who encounters Poe in Richmond and joins him and his friend Jeremiah Reynolds (no relation to the narrator) on a journey to the center of the earth, a journey accomplished by features principally from *Pym* (e.g., their voyage begins on *The Grampus*) but also from "Hans Pfaall," "The Balloon Hoax," and "MS. Found in a Bottle." Although Rucker manages to lace his tale with a number of allusions to Poe's life and career (e.g., Virginia Poe, Maria Clemm, "Berenice," "The Imp of the Perverse," "William Wilson," "The City in the Sea"), his focus is not upon Poe but upon the fantasy world of the inner earth. But here Rucker is no match for Poe himself. Where Poe was a master of visual composition, a master at describing his fantasy worlds in such unmistakably clear detail that his reader enters them effortlessly, Rucker's descriptions of the hollow earth are so confusing in composition, in dimension, and in detail that this central portion of his story is the least interesting and renders the novel as a whole disappointing.

Although Poe plays a principal role in neither *The Black Throne* nor *The Hollow Earth*, he fares quite differently in each novel. The Poe of Zelazny and Saberhagen remains the longstanding romantic figure of the otherworldly, melancholy aesthete unsuited to ordinary affairs. Rucker's Poe, on the other hand, is a uniformly unsavory character. Arrogant, cowardly, whining, self-indulgent, and sexually impotent, he is responsible for Virginia's death, resorts to crime to finance the expedition, but is in abject fear of participating in the expedition personally. To be sure, Poe has suffered as badly as this at the hands of others, but what is puzzling about Rucker's rendering of him is its gratuitousness: nothing in *The Hollow Earth* calls for casting Poe in a role of this nature.

John E. Reilly
*College of the Holy Cross*

A New Scholarly Series